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Twentieth Special Session

Official Records

6th plenary meeting
Tuesday, 9 June 1998, 7 p.m.
New York

President: Mr. Udovenko . . . . . (Ukraine)

In the absence of the President, Mr. Jele (South Africa), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 7 p.m.

Agenda item 8 (*continued*)

General debate

The Acting President: I give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Konstantinos Gitonas, Minister of Health of Greece.

Mr. Gitonas (Greece): As I address this historic special session on behalf of the Greek Government, allow me to convey my congratulations to the President of the General Assembly on the manner in which he has been guiding our deliberations. I would also like to pay tribute to the Chairman of the preparatory body, the representative of Portugal, for the excellent and effective manner in which he performed his functions.

The Right Honourable John Prescott, Deputy Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, speaking on behalf of the Presidency of the European Union, yesterday delivered an important statement, to which my Government fully subscribes.

The twentieth special session of the General Assembly, devoted to the drug problem, provides an excellent opportunity to assess all aspects of the international drug problem, to reflect on our past achievements — and on some failures — and to renew and strengthen our commitment to decisively fighting against drugs. We therefore consider this session to be an event of exceptional importance, a real turning point which should and will be crowned with success.

Undoubtedly, the fundamental prerequisite for a successful struggle against drugs is that our nations, big and small, rich and poor alike, should each take its proper share of responsibility in this common endeavour, and provide the United Nations, which remains mankind's best hope, with the means necessary to carry out the relevant mandate that we, the Member States, have entrusted to the Organization. We also believe that the drugs problem cannot be successfully tackled if socio-economic ills, such as poverty, unemployment, racial discrimination, xenophobia, social exclusion and other ills, are not combated and eradicated.

The fight against drugs is an issue of high priority on the political agenda of the Greek Government. We consider drugs to be a social evil of the most serious proportions, as it mainly threatens our youth, our country's most valuable asset. There is a national approach vis-à-vis the drugs problem in Greece. Therefore, at the initiative of the Greek Prime Minister, Mr. Costas Simitis, a permanent parliamentary committee on drugs has been established, in which all political parties in the Greek Parliament are represented.

Greece, because of its geographical position in the sensitive region of south-eastern Europe, its extended

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coastline and its almost 3,000 islands, is suffering consequences such as an increase in illicit trafficking and in the abuse of narcotic drugs. From the point of view of contractual commitments, Greece, being fully committed to the struggle against drugs, has ratified and fully implements all relevant international conventions.

The Greek Government has also introduced strict legislation for combating drugs and related forms of criminality such as money-laundering, as well as for the monitoring of chemical precursors.

As an acknowledgment of its contribution to the establishment of ties of cooperation and mutual understanding with the countries of the area, the Dublin Group, an institution formed to combat drugs, has recently decided to renew the mandate of Greece as Chair for the Balkan and Middle East regions for two more years. I would also like to mention that in my country we have a National Coordinator on narcotic drugs issues, whose main responsibility is to formulate the relevant national Greek positions in close cooperation with the competent authorities, and to present them in international forums. In addition, four independent public services deal with drug law enforcement: the police force, the customs service, the financial and economic crimes office and the ports authority. A joint organ has been established to coordinate the activities of these four services and to collect, evaluate and disseminate information.

It is the rule of the Greek Government to give high priority to the formulation and implementation of a prevention policy against drugs. In this context, we have established an organization which, among other responsibilities, is charged with disseminating information, raising public awareness and promoting preventive activities to be implemented by local authorities and non-governmental organizations. In the field of treatment, programmes aiming at detoxification and harm reduction for addicted persons have been established. Social rehabilitation of ex-addicts is also a main task. The Greek Government has taken appropriate measures to encourage, through subsidies, the public and private sectors to employ ex-addicts. Moreover, it should be noted that, three weeks ago, the Greek Prime Minister himself inaugurated a new unit for addicts who are willing to undergo treatment.

We are at a crossroads in the fight against drugs. The challenge is before us, and we should meet it. This time, there will be no excuse if we fail. We do not have the right to disappoint our children and grandchildren back home, who are looking forward to hearing from us not only that we have laid the foundation stone of the building during this historic gathering, but that we are indeed resolved to build, worldwide, a drug-free society.

Finally, it would be an omission not to recall what Hippocrates, the Greek father of medicine, said about medical practice: "It is better to prevent than to heal". Let us simply follow his wise advice if we want to produce tangible results in combating the world drug problem and if we want to create at the beginning of the next century a drug-free world.

The Acting President: I thank the Minister of Health of Greece for his statement.

I give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Casimir Oyé Mba, Minister of State, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation of Gabon.

Mr. Oyé Mba (Gabon) (*interpretation from French*): Because of the Organization of African Unity summit now taking place at Ouagadougou, the President of the Gabonese Republic, His Excellency El Hadj Omar Bongo, is unable to be in New York, as he would have liked, to participate in this special session. He has asked me to convey his regrets to the members of the Assembly and to assure them of his full support.

I have the honour of speaking on behalf of President Bongo, and on behalf of Gabon, to join other participants in reviewing how far we have come and in considering new ideas in our fight against the world scourge of drugs, a scourge that all of us must join in combating. Combating drugs requires laying the foundations of a world of peace, stability and human progress. It requires ensuring the security of individuals and of peoples. It requires preventing crime and terrorism. Combating drugs also requires guarantees of respect for the rule of law and for human rights. Finally, it requires making it possible for our young people to enjoy physical health and moral strength so that they can effectively participate in the life of their countries.

It is gratifying that the Organization has recognized the criminal nature of drug-trafficking and has opted for a global approach to addressing this scourge — a scourge that spares no country.

Aware of the threat, Gabon held its first national seminar on drugs in June 1989, and in December 1990 Libreville was the site of the first drugs seminar for countries of the Economic Community of Central African

States. This reflects the interest of the Gabonese authorities in this issue, and their intention to implement the recommendations of the 1990 special session of the General Assembly, which declared the period 1991-2000 the United Nations Decade on Drug Abuse.

Since that time, Governments have intensified their struggle against this terrible phenomenon, and many initiatives have emerged. Today, the Gabonese authorities are sparing no effort to assist agencies and non-governmental organizations in carrying out preventive action in places subject to high risk, such as schools and universities. Let me note a few of my country's activities in this regard. In 1993 we adopted legislative reform to adapt our laws to the drug phenomenon by including provisions on prevention, treatment and punishment. This also covered the definition of crimes, sentencing and criminal procedures. I should also mention the opening of a drug addiction treatment department in the Melen psychiatric hospital outside Libreville. The Government plans also to establish a treatment and reintegration centre for drug addicts and alcoholics.

Gabon's commitment to implementing a realistic policy to combat drugs has in recent years been reflected in a number of activities, first and foremost the creation of an anti-drug office, the establishment of a regional toxicology laboratory and the creation of an inter-ministerial commission to combat drug addiction.

My country, of course, is a signatory of the international instruments on drugs: the Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs of 1961 as amended by the 1972 Protocol; the Convention on Psychotropic Substances of 1971; and the United Nations Convention against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances of 1988. As current Chairman of the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa, Gabon recently convened a meeting of ministers of defence and of the interior of our subregion, held in Libreville from 28 to 30 April 1998 — the first such meeting since we achieved independence. The purpose of the meeting was to review all the factors in strengthening confidence, peace and security in Central Africa. Specifically, the ministers examined the possibility of setting up as soon as possible a programme to combat the illicit trafficking of drugs in the subregion. They emphasized the urgency of adopting effective measures to help eradicate the spreading scourge of drugs. Among the recommendations adopted as a result of the work of that meeting were the creation of a technical police task force with the objective of cooperation among the various police institutions; increased vigilance over border crossings and transborder transport; the installation or improvement at land, air and sea borders of equipment for border control and the detection of forbidden substances.

I appeal here to the international community to recognize not only the efforts of my country, Gabon, but also those of all the countries of the subregion in our fight against the spread of drugs.

As all the speakers who have preceded me have said, the subject that brings us together today is serious and disturbing. Indeed, since the first conference on this issue was held in 1909, in Shanghai, a great many things have happened: a system of international rules and regulations has gradually been established, and international instruments authorizing Governments to exercise increasing control over the circulation of narcotics and psychotropic substances have been adopted. The last United Nations session devoted to this question took place here in 1990.

Thus, the time has come to make a firm commitment at all levels — national, international, regional and subregional — to achieve fully the objectives that we established in 1990. In this connection, the Commission on Narcotic Drugs must remain the main body charged with overseeing the global drug situation and to make recommendations on strengthening international controls. As for the International Narcotics Control Board, it should remain the main authority for verifying implementation of the conventions by Governments. Finally, the United Nations International Drug Control Programme must be able to continue to play its role as coordinator of the United Nations activities to control narcotics.

I hope that the most developed countries will lend their experience, their expertise and their techniques to developing countries, because we all belong to one and the same world and the fight against drugs should be conducted jointly by all.

Gabon, it is true, is not currently considered a major producer or distributor of drugs. But it is also affected and therefore feels solidarity with all those who are fighting against this scourge. This is why I shall conclude by expressing the hope that States, international organizations, civil society — in short, all of those who are working to combat drugs — show determination and solidarity in order to ensure the wholesomeness and

stability of our world, and especially the health and vigour of our young people.

The Acting President: I thank the Minister of State, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation of Gabon for his statement.

I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Sékou Koureissy Condé, Minister of Security of Guinea.

Mr. Condé (Guinea) (*interpretation from French*): Allow me first to express to the President my delegation's pleasure at seeing him presiding over the work of the twentieth special session of the General Assembly, devoted to the common struggle against the global drug problem. At the same time, I wish to renew to the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, the support and the sincere encouragement of His Excellency General Lansana Conté, President of the Republic of Guinea, for his ceaseless efforts to promote and attain the noble ideals contained in the Charter of our Organization.

Drugs, narcotics and psychotropic substances are today the focus of our great concern. They demand that all mankind give deeper and more realistic thought to how to put an end to this scourge that in recent years has reached disturbing proportions. That is why my country, which continues to strengthen its laws in the struggle against drugs, narcotics and psychotropic substances, welcomes this special session and calls on the Members of the United Nations to take common, concrete and dynamic action to destroy national and international networks for the production of, trafficking in and consumption of these substances.

Today, people are unwilling witnesses to the spread of this scourge, which, on the one hand, affects all segments of society, particularly the most vulnerable segment — youth — and, on the other hand, causes tragedies in families and fosters delinquency and crime. That is why the Government of the Republic of Guinea, in collaboration with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), initiated an integrated, preventive education programme to be included in the curriculum of schools, professional training institutes and universities. The purpose of this programme is to save young people, the primary victims of drugs, who, entrapped as they emerge from childhood, then fall victim to the serious sicknesses of mankind.

The Guinean Government welcomes the initiative of UNESCO in choosing the memorable day of 8 June 1998 to officially inaugurate in Guinea this important programme, the impact of which, I am convinced, will support the national anti-drug programmes and promote a considerable reduction in demand.

The Government of the Republic of Guinea, recognizing the extent to which this scourge has increased, has ratified the international conventions in this area and has implemented policies to really combat the problem. These policies include the drafting, adoption and promulgation of a series of legal and regulatory instruments with the objective of suppressing the production, consumption, trafficking and sale of illicit drugs. Furthermore, from now on, the national anti-drug institutions, national media, unions, religious leaders and non-governmental organizations are dedicating themselves to the organization and regular holding of conferences to raise awareness of the problem and to explain to the targeted social groups how this scourge can ravage public health and our still fragile economy.

Allow me here to thank all the countries and international organizations that have provided bilateral and multilateral assistance to the Republic of Guinea. This cooperation has allowed our national anti-drug institutions to achieve convincing results. These institutions are as follows: the inter-ministerial committee to combat drugs, established by decree No. 67 of 2 August 1994, which coordinates all activities to combat drugs throughout the country, in accordance with the four areas established by the United Nations — namely, prevention, suppression, treatment and social rehabilitation; and the central anti-drug office, established by decree No. 66 of 2 August 1994, in charge of coordinating all the services involved in the suppression of drugs: police, gendarmerie and republican guards.

From 1995 to the present, the national anti-drug institutions have made the following seizures: 727,929 kilograms of cannabis, 16.1 grams of cocaine, 1,626.9 grams and 70 packets of heroine, 11,182,500 ephedrine tablets, 21 amphetamine tablets and 2,052 tablets of diajapan. These telling statistics certainly exhibit the will of the Government of Guinea to undertake vigorously ali the strategies to eradicate systematically and definitively this scourge throughout the world.

We will never stop stressing that at the global level we must clearly identify and define the ways and means to prevent the redistribution by accomplices of drugs, narcotics and psychotropic substances that have been seized. In the Republic of Guinea, this matter is of

paramount importance, and it was resolved by decree No. 158 of 6 June 1991, which established a national committee to incinerate and destroy seized drugs. I should also recall that local administrative authorities, along with the authorities in decentralized communities, are very much involved in searching for, locating and eliminating Indian hemp plantations throughout the national territory.

However, over the past seven years we have taken in more than 600,000 refugees, and as we deal with the economic and social implications of this, we are made aware every day of cannabis cultivation and also of the smuggling of this and other drugs along the length of our borders. New approaches are being tried in order to establish rigorous control over areas that receive refugees, particularly in Guinée Fôrestière and in certain places in Basse Guinée.

We aspire to cover the entire national territory by gradually decentralizing the central anti-drug office and the inter-ministerial committee to combat drugs. Unfortunately, we have been thwarted due to the lack of available qualified personnel and of appropriate equipment. In the area of prevention, at the national level, in the keeping with UNDCP policies, we have planned strategies to promote the substitution of other crops in the cannabis-growing areas. Ongoing support from the international community is needed if we are going to make up for what we lack and make our national anti-drug policies more dynamic.

I wish to conclude by assuring the Assembly of the commitment and determination of the Guinean Government to fulfil its duty in the global fight against drugs so that we can all witness together the advent of a world without drugs.

The Acting President: I thank the Minister of Security of Guinea for his statement.

I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Alhaji Abdullahi Ibrahim, Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Nigeria.

Mr. Ibrahim (Nigeria): I wish to thank all those who, through telephone calls and visits, have consoled us on the occasion of the passing away of our head of State, Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces, General Sani Abacha, yesterday.

One of the far-reaching achievements recorded in the global fight against illicit drugs was no doubt the adoption in December 1988 of the United Nations Convention against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances. As we celebrate the tenth anniversary of this achievement, it is only pertinent that we look back and assess our efforts. To give effect to the 1988 Convention, the General Assembly, at its seventeenth special session, adopted resolution S-17/2 on 23 February 1990. Annexed to that resolution were the Political Declaration and Global Programme of Action, setting out objectives and the measures to translate them into reality. The Programme of Action required all nations to formulate policies and structures designed to combat the menace of drug-trafficking and abuse.

After the adoption of the 1988 Convention, and even before the adoption of the Political Declaration and Global Programme of Action, my country, Nigeria, enacted decree No. 48 of 1989 setting up the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA). The Agency is entrusted with wide powers to fight the menace of drugs in all its ramifications. In the same vein, the National Agency for Food and Drug Administration and Control (NAFDAC) was established in 1993 to regulate the manufacture and importation of all drugs into the country to ensure that they are licit and fit for public use. The services of this organization are on the record for people to see.

My Government has gone further, adopting additional measures in its continuous fight against illicit drug-trafficking and abuse. These include the formation of a National Narcotics, Money-Laundering and Advance Fee Fraud Control Policy with succinct procedures for implementation; the establishment of a Ministerial Task Force on Drugs and Financial Crimes whose members are all cabinet ministers; the appointment of the Special Adviser to the Head of State on Drugs and Financial Crimes, to coordinate the efforts of all related agencies and advise on new initiatives and policies; the establishment of the Inter-Ministerial Committee on Drugs to facilitate inter-agency cooperation among agencies responsible for drug control and enforcement; the formation of a National Drug Control strategy in line with the United Nations Global Programme of Action; the enactment of a Money-Laundering and Advance Fee Fraud Decree; the establishment of more Miscellaneous Offences Tribunals and the strengthening of the existing ones to facilitate trials of drug offenders; and the establishment of additional drug rehabilitation centres and the re-equipping of old ones.

The aforementioned initiatives have ensured measurable success in our drug control efforts. The NDLEA and NAFDAC, which are the principal drug enforcement agencies, have effectively curtailed the drug menace in the areas of both drug-trafficking and abuse. These efforts were commended by the International Narcotics Control Board (INCB) in its 1995, 1996 and 1997 reports. The INCB specifically noted with satisfaction in its 1997 report the successful cannabis-eradication campaign carried out by Nigeria from January 1994 to August 1997, which led to the destruction of over 60 tons of cannabis. In a briefing organized by the United Nations International Drug Control Programme at United Nations Headquarters on 6 May 1998, it was observed that most drug barons and traffickers in Nigeria had fled to neighbouring countries.

To consolidate these gains, and in the realization that it is safer and cheaper to sustain a drug-free society than to address the treatment and rehabilitation of drug addicts, Nigeria has put forth a coherent drug demand reduction strategy. This strategy is implemented through several broad-based programmes of guidance and counselling, public enlightenment, social welfare and rehabilitation, drug education in schools and for the public, intensive research and data collection. We are grateful in this regard to the International Narcotics Control Board, which highlighted our achievements in its current report, detailing how in Nigeria, tightened control over psychotropic substances has led to substantial seizure of diverted drugs, thus preventing millions of street doses from reaching their illicit markets. The report also said there are indications that, due to strengthened controls, seaports and airports in Nigeria are now used less frequently by traffickers for the trans-shipment of cocaine and heroin than in the past.

In pursuance of the objectives of the various international initiatives, Nigeria has continuously explored existing subregional, regional and global collaborative efforts towards controlling the scourge of illicit drugs. At the subregional level, Nigeria successfully chaired a Conference of Ministers in charge of drug control in the West African subregion at which the Praia Political Declaration and Plan of Action for Drug Abuse Control for the Period 1997-2001 was adopted. This Declaration was subsequently approved by the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Conference of Heads of State and Government in Abuja, Nigeria, in August 1997. Similarly, Nigeria has signed and is in the process of negotiating bilateral memorandums of understanding with some countries on the control of illicit drugs and financial crimes.

One area of importance to us in Nigeria, and indeed throughout Africa, which we believe should be addressed in the course of our deliberations is the issue of the cultivation of cannabis, which is widespread in Africa. As the Assembly knows, cannabis is the most widely abused illicit drug in Africa, although a large portion of the cultivated cannabis is intended for export. The cultivation and abuse of cannabis is affecting African States in the areas of public health, the economy and social stability. There is an increase in the intercontinental trafficking in cannabis and other illicit drugs.

In view of the global problem of cannabis abuse, there is a need for greater commitment to the eradication of cannabis plants wherever they are cultivated. It is in this regard that the plan of action developed by UNDCP for the eradication of narcotic crops should include activities for the eradication of cannabis plants.

Finally, we believe the time has come to apply greater understanding to the problem of drugs. This is because the drug problem is global in nature. It does not distinguish between developing or developed countries in its impact. A situation in which particular countries are singled out for condemnation should be avoided. As we have always maintained, for measurable achievement to be recorded against illicit drugs, a re-diagnosis of the problem is required. Illicit drugs, like all commodities of trade, obey the principles of economics, particularly the law of supply and demand. The consumption of illicit drugs sustains its production and trafficking. A reappraisal of the problem, therefore, must of necessity address the problem of consumption. This special session provides a ready forum for this exercise. Nigeria continues to be ready to actively participate in this all-important session for the betterment of our people in particular and humanity in general.

The Acting President: I thank the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Nigeria for his statement.

I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Khalifa Al-Shaali, Commander and Director-General of the Police Aviation Corps of the Ministry of the Interior of the United Arab Emirates.

Mr. Al-Shaali (United Arab Emirates) (*interpretation from Arabic*): It gives the United Arab Emirates great pleasure to participate in this international gathering which brings the entire world together to undertake a noble endeavour aimed at protecting mankind

from the devastating effects of drug abuse, which do not discriminate on the basis of race, nationality, colour or creed.

We extend a special greeting to the President of Mexico, who took the initiative to call for this meeting. We also extend greetings to the international Organization and all its officials, and to all those States that responded to the invitation to attend this international gathering. In this, we are bound by our general agreement as to the gravity of this phenomenon and the enormity of the losses, and prompted by the hope of having the necessary ways and means to protect our societies from this imminent danger.

It is God's will that the United Arab Emirates is located in the middle, between the eastern and western parts of the world. This has made our country vulnerable to the lethal scourge of drugs. Proceeding from the conscious recognition of this danger, and after domestic studies have proved that drugs are more prevalent among young men than among other people, my country has taken such preventive steps as drawing up a national strategy compatible with our social values and enlisting the instruments of social control for protection against drugs.

Specialized studies in my country show almost unanimously that organized crime syndicates target the unemployed, seeking to enlist them in their criminal endeavours in general and for the commission of drug crimes in particular. That is why my country has taken a firm position and found work opportunities for all its citizens.

In addition, the State has disbursed generous financial rewards to the members of society who cooperate with the criminal justice institutions and the police in reporting drug crimes. This has opened channels for cooperation between the police and the public and established an important base for information on criminal activities. The efficiency of the security institutions has been enhanced, and they have been provided with trained personnel capable of combating drugs using state-of-the-art methods.

Furthermore, modern control and monitoring devices have been installed on the land borders, the ports and airports of the State in order to prevent the entry or transit of drugs. Special clinics to treat and reintegrate addicts into society, using the most modern methods, have been established. Medical services have been directed to cooperate with security institutions and taught how to work together to accord special priority to the treatment and rehabilitation of those who have fallen victim to these poisons.

These programmes, to which the institutions of both official and civil society have contributed, have born fruit. From 1995 until the first quarter of 1998, United Arab Emirates security services managed to uncover 1,689 drug cases, arrested 2,687 suspects and seized 10,400 kilograms of hashish, 83 kilograms of opium, 142 kilograms of heroin and 7 million narcotic pills. In addition, they seized two factories for the production of narcotic pills.

Furthermore, in coordination with the legislative bodies, the prevention and crime-fighting institutions have promulgated legislation to cope with the drug phenomenon, in accordance with international and universal requirements. Administrative and banking measures have been taken to prevent money-laundering as a prelude to the promulgation of a law prohibiting these activities. Also, through cooperation among the security and judicial institutions, strict control has been exercised over the production and distribution of chemicals and precursors used in the illicit production of drugs. This paves the way for a law that governs this question under the United Nations Convention against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances of 1988. As a result of its belief in the importance of cooperation in the prevention and in combating drugs, my country has ratified the Conventions of 1961, 1971 and 1988, in addition to signing bilateral agreements and memorandums of understanding with a number of fraternal and friendly States, all aimed at confronting the crimes of illicit drugs.

We are making every effort to attend all international forums convened under the auspices of regional, Arab and international organizations. To further this international cooperation, we have established direct links with the authorities in numerous States, which has led to the opening of liaison offices in some of them. This has contributed to an exchange of information for aborting many criminal activities.

Allow me to state from this rostrum that the United Arab Emirates supports the efforts of this international Organization: its special programme to eliminate the cultivation of illicit crops by the year 2008; the draft Declaration on the Guiding Principles of Drug Demand Reduction; the Action Plan against Illicit Manufacture, Trafficking and Abuse of Amphetamine-type Stimulants and Their Precursors; measures to promote judicial

cooperation and counter money-laundering; and the Political Declaration, which we consider to be an integrated instrument based on consolidated international legitimacy which ensures international cooperation in the context of this legitimacy.

The Acting President: I thank the Commander and Director-General of the Police Aviation Corps of the Ministry of the Interior of the United Arab Emirates for his statement.

I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Sidney Mufamadi, Minister for Safety and Security of South Africa.

Mr. Mufamadi (South Africa): This special session of the General Assembly is of historic importance for South Africa, taking place as it is at a time when our country, having accomplished political transformation, now has the will, the vision and the focus to achieve a better life for all. One of the important elements of that better life is a drug-free environment.

The report of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs, as well as statements made by the various heads of delegations, has provided us with both factual material and analytical tools that have broadened and deepened our understanding of this international pandemic. This session therefore holds out the promise of enlightening our efforts in formulating solutions to a problem which so significantly affects the global economy and local economies in such pernicious ways.

Although South African organized crime is still inchoate in its level of organization, the reintegration of our country into the "global village" has increased the prospect of local criminals linking up with elements that have long been at the centre of the transnational dimension of organized crime.

Drug traffickers have found South Africa to be one of the countries which provide them with a congenial environment for their criminal enterprise. They have turned our means of global trade, such as telecommunications and finance, into their own tools of trade to achieve illegal profits. They have caused drugs to flow between countries within the southern African region and beyond. Thus, they have drawn our country into the increasingly tangled web of transit points through which illicit products and profits flow.

Attesting to this is the fact that about 300 South African nationals are in custody either as suspects or as persons already serving sentences for drug-related offences in Latin America and Europe, as well as other African countries.

We see it as vital that all our responses, at all levels, are underpinned by a master plan.

Together with the other member States of the Southern African Development Community, we signed the Protocol on combating illicit drug-trafficking in the region.

In the four and a half years of its existence, the new South Africa has worked hard to give practical meaning to all the international instruments to combat the drug problem. We are continually updating our legislation to bring it into line with international norms.

Trends serve to underscore the point that the notion of a geographical separation which is based on dividing countries or even regions into zones of cultivation, production and consumption is not grounded in objective reality. In reality, the problem is manifesting itself in a manner which calls for an intervention of the kind that the Commission on Narcotic Drugs is proposing, namely, a package of balanced measures which will be more effective in bringing to fruition our dream of substantially reducing, if not completely eliminating by the year 2008, the scourge of narcotics abuse. It is for this reason that we fully endorse the package that is before the Assembly.

The social landscape of our countries is today replete with millions of people who are burdened with suffering. Their addiction to drugs has destroyed their health, rendering them unable to support themselves and their families and leading them to criminal activities to pay for their expensive habit.

Needless to say, this public health problem generates an enormous fiscal drain on our economies. The regenerative impact of the approach which will put victims at the centre of our attention can therefore not be overemphasized.

We have identified the restoration of the rule of law as one of the imperatives of the equation of the change process which is currently under way in our country. Indeed, this challenge is also being faced by other countries which are at comparable stages of transition.

The drug-trafficking problem, however, continues to keep large segments of our population outside of a system of law. Drug consumption and cultivation create strata of members of the population who are vulnerable to threats and intimidation by forces outside the law. These are pockets of marginalized groups that become vulnerable to and dependent on illegal forces.

This problem is perhaps more acute in incipient democracies than in established democracies. It is for this reason that we welcome the commitment expressed by several donor countries to increase their contributions to the United Nations International Drug Control Programme (UNDCP). Once placed at the disposal of UNDCP, these resources will enhance its capacity to confer on the law enforcement agencies, especially in the developing countries, a stature and efficiency commensurate with the enemy we are battling.

The enormity of our transformation challenge entails such basic necessities to human life as the provision of decent housing, school books for every pupil, a hospital bed for every patient and a monthly pension for the aged. We have to rely on a finite resource base to attend to these basic needs of our people. However, we are acutely sensitive to the need to attach equal importance to directing resources towards tackling the debilitating effects of the scourge of narcotic drugs.

The South African Government has decided to increase its contribution to UNDCP. This gesture reflects the strength of our purpose and resolve to take the war to the criminals.

The Acting President: I thank the Minister of Safety and Security of South Africa for his statement.

I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Martin Belinga Eboutou, Chairman of the delegation of Cameroon.

Mr. Belinga Eboutou (Cameroon) (*interpretation from French*): During this fiftieth anniversary year of the Declaration of Human Rights, it is fitting that the General Assembly has decided to hold this session devoted to the struggle against illicit trafficking in drugs and related activities.

Is there any right more fundamental than the right to life and to dignity? Drugs are a violation of this most precious right. They jeopardize the freedom and development of young people. Therefore, they threaten society at its very foundation.

The social and economic consequences of this scourge are particularly disastrous and worrying. The health of growing numbers of younger and younger people is irremediably compromised. The fabric of the family is torn apart. Crime in all its forms and manifestations spreads. Economies are corrupted by financial flows of doubtful origin which bear the seeds of destabilization. Dark forces hold countries and Governments in their evil grip and branch out day by day.

Today, all regions of the world have been affected, and the evil is constantly spreading. Quite obviously, we all must act. Global, concerted, decisive action by the international community is now more necessary than ever before. This action must attack causes as well as effects. It must go beyond suppression and deal increasingly with prevention.

What good is it to go after the drug dealers if the major producers are allowed to prosper, if monstrous networks of fictitious companies and mafia-like banks are allowed to keep their ill-gotten gains, if peasants have no alternative but to live by the cultivation of the poppy?

The success of the struggle against illicit trafficking in drugs and related activities depends on our taking into account all these matters. Even more, success depends on the real determination of the international community to make the necessary effort to succeed.

In this connection, my country, which has already acceded to various international instruments on illicit trafficking in narcotic drugs, supports the efforts of the United Nations in this area. We believe that these efforts must be intensified. The developing countries in particular, because they are more vulnerable, must have increased assistance in a number of areas, including the implementation of education, training and information programmes for young people; the promotion of activities that generate income and employment for young people; the development of social rehabilitation programmes for street children and juvenile delinquents; technical assistance to police services, particularly through training in new methods of detection and investigation; the development of substitution crops for peasants who grow the poppy; and, finally, better remuneration for these substitution crops on the international market.

With the efforts made in this area, and with a decisive frontal attack on these problems, we will achieve

significant results in the struggle against the production of and illicit trafficking in narcotic drugs.

Cameroon intends to protect its youth. We have developed a plan of action to combat drug-trafficking that combines prevention and suppression. An inter-ministerial committee presided over by the Minister of Health is in charge of following up preventive action. Our legislation punishes harshly the production of, trade in and consumption of drugs and drug money-laundering.

Naturally, then, Cameroon fully supports the three draft resolutions recommended by the preparatory body, which are now before us. At the threshold of the twenty-first century, we are entitled to place our hopes in the steadfast political will and determination of our States to achieve the objectives set forth in these three documents.

The Acting President: I thank the Chairman of the delegation of Cameroon for his statement.

I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Sotirios Zackheos, Chairman of the delegation of Cyprus.

Mr. Zackheos (Cyprus): It is a particular pleasure to see you so ably chairing our deliberations, Sir.

My delegation, as an associate member of the European Union, has already aligned itself with the statement made by the Deputy Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, Mr. John Prescott, on behalf of the European Union. I would like, however, to briefly address a number of issues which we consider to be of particular interest.

First and foremost, I would like to pay tribute to the efforts of the United Nations as a whole and, most particularly, those of the United Nations International Drug Control Programme (UNDCP). UNDCP has provided the leadership required at the international level to pursue a large array of policies that aim at dealing comprehensively with the various aspects of the world drug problem.

The twentieth special session and the documents to be adopted are expected to reaffirm the will of the international community, at the threshold of the third millennium, to confront the drug problem and to provide the impetus for sustained action whose central component is effective cooperation at the international and national levels.

The efforts of the international community, however, will not lead to the desired results unless we face up to the root causes of the problem. Poverty, socio-economic imbalances, unemployment, the need for debt alleviation, lack of opportunities in education and the alienation so often prevalent in urban society must be urgently addressed to preclude the slide into the abyss of drug abuse.

Effective action to reduce the consumption of drugs must be combined with efforts at the international level to reduce the production of crops. Alternative development and crop substitution should be actively assisted, together with programmes of rehabilitation and social reintegration for drug addicts. It is also imperative that police and judicial cooperation be steadily enhanced.

Although my country, Cyprus, is a relatively drug-free society, the spectre of the infiltration of drugs into our culture hangs like a sword of Damocles over us. That is why Cyprus has already in place a national policy to combat drugs with an information campaign that drives home the message that drugs constitute a mortal danger. We are determined to confront the issue before it becomes a problem. To that effect, a national committee for the prevention of trafficking and use of illicit drugs was established with the purpose of coordinating and providing consultation in matters of prevention and information.

As a major trans-shipment point in the eastern Mediterranean at the crossroads of Europe, Africa and Asia, we are aware that drug shipments to Europe could be attempted through Cyprus. That is why the Government, in cooperation with other countries, is actively pursuing a policy of customs controls. A vital component of this policy is a system of liaison officers from 13 countries, stationed in Cyprus and working closely with Cypriot police and customs agents with a view to thwarting attempts to use Cyprus for trans-shipments to Europe.

Another area in which Cyprus is pursuing a pre-emptive policy in order to safeguard against the possible use of our country by the drug cartels is that of money-laundering, an area in which the United Nations and many Governments are focusing their efforts. The efforts of my Government have already received international recognition. As stated in a recent United States State Department report,

> "The Cyprus Government was extremely active in 1997 in its efforts to implement provisions of its 1996 anti-money-laundering legislation." (*International Narcotics Control Strategy Report*, 1997)

Similarly, UNDCP report 98-15494 of 29 May 1998, entitled "Financial havens, banking secrecy and money-laundering" points out that Cyprus

> "has strengthened its regulatory framework and increased its capacity for financial monitoring".

These references do justice to my Government's concerted efforts, including the establishment of a unit for combating money-laundering, and testify to our determination to prevent the use of Cyprus's extensive financial service sector for laundering money derived from illegal activities. The example of Cyprus proves that, with determination and international cooperation, a flourishing offshore centre like ours can be at the forefront of international efforts for combating drugs and money-laundering.

Cyprus, which is a law-abiding State that respects its international obligations, has ratified all major United Nations conventions on drug use and trafficking, including the landmark United Nations Convention against the Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances of 1988.

Unfortunately, however, the Government of the Republic is prevented from honouring its obligations throughout its territory as a result of the forced division of the island. In the area currently outside the control of my Government, serious criminal activity is reported.

No nation, large or small, rich or poor, is immune to the dangers posed by the spread of drugs. Our efforts can bear fruit only through perseverance and the effective cooperation of the international community, which must display its determination and must never relent. This special session is a historic opportunity, as exemplified by the presence of so many heads of State, to move the process forward. I am certain that, with the combined efforts of all nations, this menace to mankind will eventually be brought under control.

The Acting President: I thank the Chairman of the delegation of Cyprus for his statement.

I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Abdul Rahman Abdulla Al Awadhi, Chairman of the Kuwaiti Committee for Prevention of Narcotic Drugs.

Mr. Al Awadhi (Kuwait) (*interpretation from Arabic*): Let me begin by thanking the President and, on behalf of my delegation, extending to him our best wishes for the success of this session.

I would also like to thank Mr. Arlacchi for his efforts in guiding the work of the United Nations bodies in combating drug abuse. I would also like to thank the United Nations for this felicitous initiative, which reflects the genuine worldwide concern over an issue that is seriously disturbing humanity in the present age.

Drug abuse has become a grave threat to mankind. It particularly affects younger people, who are especially susceptible to the enticements of the pernicious traffickers of this murderous evil.

The drifting of youth onto the path of excessive pleasure-seeking in general, and drug abuse in particular, is a sign of the spiritual void which afflicts contemporary human societies. Immersion in excessive materialism has stripped mankind of the spiritual dimension that sets it apart from other creatures of God.

The battle against drug abuse is a common one; it must be waged by society as a whole. The responsibility for this battle falls upon the family and all members of the public. This should be coupled with a mobilization of all national resources, including financial resources, information services and educational systems to combat that scourge of the spread of drugs. In addition, international cooperation within the instruments to be adopted by this special session will have an important role and will constitute an effective base. This requires strengthening international efforts, especially in the areas of information-sharing and technical expertise exchange, for this is a *sine qua non* for any effective global campaign to eradicate this serious threat to humankind.

The State of Kuwait is devoting particular attention to this issue. Since the early 1950s, we have recognized the serious implications of the drug problem. A Narcotics Drug Control Office was established at that time and evolved, and was equipped with well-trained personnel and equipment. In 1976 that Office was upgraded to a Drug Control Agency, to which all cases relating to narcotic drugs are referred.

In the legislative area, the penal code of 1960 provides for penalties for persons who are convicted of trafficking, using or facilitating the use of drugs. Subsequently, a law was enacted regarding the control and trafficking of narcotic drugs and their use in Kuwait.

An annex cataloguing narcotic drugs was also adopted. Law No. 84 of 1987 on psychotropic substances and the regulation of their use and trafficking was then enacted. This law is considered very advanced, because it does not perceive drug abusers as criminals but deals with them as patients, giving them a chance to go personally, or with their next of kin, to a rehabilitation clinic where they receive adequate care. They do not acquire a criminal record. Following treatment, they are allowed to go back to society. If they do not comply and revert to drug abuse, then they are held accountable and treated as criminals. That process would be coordinated between the rehabilitation centre and the judicial authorities. With regard to criminals and traffickers in these substances, the penalty is very severe. It could even be capital punishment if previous, appropriate penalties proved not to be deterrent.

In October 1989, an Emiri decree was enacted that set up a national committee to combat drugs. That committee draws up general policies and coordinates efforts at the State and non-governmental levels in this area. It proposes plans and programmes of action and evaluates the follow-up in terms of prevention, treatment and implementation. That committee educates the public efforts and mobilizes its efforts in the area of combating drugs, in cooperation with the media.

If Government efforts have made solid and substantive progress in combating drugs, public effort at the grass-roots level also plays a significant role. We have many public-service centres in Kuwait that address, through their various social activities, the phenomenon of narcotic drugs. Some of these centres have even put together specialized teams that look after and treat drug addicts. In addition, there is a specialized commission whose members represent public interest societies as well as Government officials. That committee has sponsored and organized many international conferences, in which many renowned experts participated, most recently the first world conference on the role of religion and the family in protecting youth from drug abuse.

My country, which believes in the importance of collective action — that the responsibility for combating drugs is a collective one at the regional and international levels, endorsed, in Law No. 6 of 1995, a pan-Arab meeting on combating illicit trafficking in drugs and psychotropic substances, which was convened in January 1994 in Casablanca. That assemblage, under the leadership of His Highness Emir Prince Naif Ibn Abdel-Aziz, the Minister of Interior of Saudi Arabia, has made a tremendous effort to protect the Arab person from drug abuse. At the international level, Kuwait signed in October 1989 the 1988 United Nations Convention against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances.

My country notes with satisfaction the international efforts made at the regional and international levels. We appreciate the impressive efforts of the United Nations Office for Drug Control and Crime Prevention and the remarkable contribution made by Mr. Pino Arlacchi, the Director of that Office. We would like to underscore the fact that we should not treat lightly what is rumoured about lightening the punishment for the possession of drugs such as hashish, because that might tempt youth to addiction.

We believe, however, that the problem of drug abuse will remain a matter for the individual, and that all efforts should hinge on that fact. Without a certain sense of spirituality to enlighten his or her path, an individual will remain in the grip of his or her instincts and thus be highly vulnerable to Satanic temptations on a daily basis.

We are confident that the efforts made will bear fruit, God willing, if we can muster the genuine political will that provides the resolve effectively to address the phenomenon of drugs. The premise of this session is to pool our collective resources in the interest of the well-being of humanity. Testimony to that is the fact that we are meeting under the auspices of the United Nations — the voice of humankind — and we wish all present the very best of success.

The Acting President: I thank the Chairman of the Committee for the Prevention of Narcotic Drugs of Kuwait for his statement.

I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Matia Mulumba Semakula Kiwanuka, Chairman of the delegation of Uganda.

Mr. Semakula Kiwanuka (Uganda): On behalf of the Uganda delegation, it is my distinct privilege and honour to address the twentieth special session of the General Assembly on the world drug problem. Uganda

congratulates Mr. Hennadiy Udovenko for presiding over this historic session. We associate ourselves with the views expressed by the Zimbabwe on behalf of the Organization of African Unity and by Indonesia on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. In the same vein, we welcome all the statements that have been made so far.

This twentieth session is being convened at a time when we have reason to be optimistic about the future. Today's international climate is, on the whole, politically more cooperative — devoid of the East-West and North-South ideological divides. This session should therefore be a turning point for the world to go forward with renewed energy on drug control and develop a forward-looking strategy for the twenty-first century.

The drug problem is multidimensional. It cuts across the political, economic, social, legal, cultural and geographic spheres. It accounts for crime and violence; it undermines Governments and corrupts leaders. There was a time when only rich industrialized countries were spending large sums of their annual budgets on strengthening their border patrols, their law enforcement agencies and their judicial systems as well as on their health-care programmes because of the drug problem. Today the problem is worldwide and the costs, which are already staggering, are on the increase. Because the problem is multidimensional, the strategies we devise and the solutions we recommend and develop must be equally multidimensional and practical.

There is a symbiotic relationship between poverty and drugs. The Uganda delegation recommends that the drug problem be confronted on at least three specific fronts: prevention with a focus on development, prevention with a focus on producers and prevention with a focus on users.

Multidimensional strategies and solutions must more than ever before focus on this nexus between drugs, underdevelopment and poverty. We need innovative approaches to address the decaying inner cities and the growing unemployment, especially among young people. We must address the problem of the growing number of street children in our cities, the lack of access to education, urban overcrowding and the breakdown of parental and other family influences on children and youth. Sustainable economic development, which provides skills and jobs as well as road communications to open up rural areas, is a necessary strategy. The agricultural rural sector needs to be diversified so that those who grow opium and poppies have alternative cash crops.

Specifically, we agree that law-enforcement measures are absolutely essential at every stage of the drug cycle. Nevertheless, we put equal emphasis on alternative development programmes, which, in summary, should: contribute to sustainable social and economic opportunities; be linked to national development planning to ensure the sustainable political and economic integration of those areas which are today involved in illicit cultivation; be adapted to the conditions prevailing in every area; be based on a community participation approach involving indigenous knowledge, skills, interests and needs; contribute to the promotion of democratic values, which encourage community participation and the development of a civic culture that rejects illicit cultivation; build durable local institutions; empower women to participate fully in the development process; and apply appropriate demand-reduction measures where drug abuse problems exist.

Let me now turn to the very important subject of drugs and the family. Research from inside and outside the United Nations system has consistently shown that strong families protect young people against the risk of drug abuse. Research has further shown that a non-supportive family life, rather than poverty, is one of the most significant factors in predisposing young individuals to take drugs. The negative influences of the peer group are amplified when parents abdicate their traditional supervisory role.

For this reason, we call upon the Secretary-General to mobilize the United Nations system to respond with resources to the repeated calls from the General Assembly for attention to the family and its role in protecting young children.

Sub-Saharan Africa has yet to experience large-scale abuse or production of illicit drugs such as cocaine or heroin, at least to the extent experienced in other regions. Yet there is evidence to suggest that the situation is changing for the worse as a result of the political, economic and social problems and of the use of the region for transit of illicit drugs destined for other parts of the world.

The United Nations International Drug Control Programme (UNDCP), with the active cooperation of African Governments, has over the past year undertaken a fact-finding study aimed at examining the vulnerability of sub-Saharan Africa to drug production, trafficking and abuse. Uganda expresses its support for these efforts and

thanks the UNDCP for arranging a briefing session at the United Nations in May this year to highlight the growing drug problem in Africa. We also commend the United Nations Development Programme for highlighting the nexus between drugs and development.

Uganda, through its new Constitution of 1997, has adopted a political declaration to exert all efforts to dismantle drug-trafficking organizations, reduce the demand for drugs and control their illicit supply.

Uganda concurs with all the previous speakers in this debate at the special session that any lasting solution to the problem of illicit trafficking must encompass all its ramifications, including enhanced cooperation between developed and developing countries. The adoption of piecemeal or short-term measures, whether or not they encompass military options, will do little to address the current situation.

Finally, we urge the international community to support measures to combat drug abuse and drug trafficking at the regional, interregional and global levels. We support all the existing legislative mandates that emphasize the role of the United Nations, which we call upon to assist and strengthen national capacities, particularly those of the developing countries.

The Acting President: I thank the Chairman of the delegation of Uganda for his statement.

I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Alex Reyn, Chairman of the delegation of Belgium.

Mr. Reyn (Belgium) (*interpretation from French*): Mr. Jean-Luc Dehaene, the Prime Minister, would have liked to address the Assembly himself. Unfortunately, he had to decline for reasons beyond his control, and I therefore take the floor on his behalf.

As the Deputy Prime Minister of the United Kingdom said in his statement on behalf of the European Union — a statement we support — the scourge of drugs can wreck lives and communities. It knows no borders and requires us to attack it in common solidarity.

We are here today to express our determination to do so together. For several years now a growing feeling has developed among the international community as to the need to improve international cooperation regarding the drug problem. Recent developments in the international situation following the end of the cold war demonstrate a growing convergence among the interests of industrialized and developing countries, including in the area of drugs. If before we divided the world into drug producers and consumers, the same problems today tend to confront all countries, both in the North and in the South. Therefore an awareness has developed that there exists in this regard a very broad interdependence among Member States.

We have then entered an era of shared responsibility. No one doubts that the United Nations, because of its universal nature, has greatly contributed to this more balanced approach to drug problems in their international dimension. The United Nations finds itself with its back to the wall, faced with the challenge to find concrete and realistic responses in order to combat drugs effectively. Reform activities in the United Nations currently under way should strengthen its operational nature. The Secretary-General plays an essential and active role in this process.

Belgium supports the strengthening of the link between drugs and crime, as established in Vienna, and welcomes the positive impetus given by Mr. Pino Arlacchi, the Executive Director of the United Nations International Drug Control Programme (UNDCP), to strengthen and refinance United Nations drug-control machinery.

The Political Declaration we are about to adopt is an excellent tool for meeting the objectives that Belgium has set for itself for this special session. The text is based on an approach that is balanced between complementary national and international strategies. It addresses not only drug supply but also trafficking and related aspects such as international organized crime and money-laundering. The text's strength resides in its benchmark dates, which Member States must agree to abide by. Special attention has been given to the target year 2003, by which date we are to have strengthened our national programmes to reduce supply and decided on legislation that is tailored to the effective control of amphetamine-based stimulants. All of us should also before that date take effective steps to combat money-laundering.

The target date 2008 is no less ambitious. Belgium will not fail to make its contribution to international efforts for alternative development, which we fully support. It is not enough, however, simply to make statements on what should be done in the decade to come. The political commitments that we will have entered into following this special session of the General

Assembly also entail concrete actions. These actions should be solidly grounded, allowing us to maximize the operational potential of UNDCP and the International Narcotics Control Board, in particular through the improvement of their status and their enhanced coordination within the United Nations system.

Belgium has always considered the United Nations Conventions on drugs — all ratified and scrupulously implemented by my country — to be absolutely essential instruments. However, we must observe that, unfortunately, not all Member States have implemented all the measures at our disposal to combat and control drugs contained therein. In this regard, the importance of this special session of the General Assembly is dual: first, to encourage and to help Member States to implement, without reservation, the texts of those universal Conventions; but also to take a step forward and send world opinion a clear-cut message: that drugs and drug addiction are not inevitable phenomena, and that the States assembled here today at the United Nations have decided once again to combat drugs at all levels and in all aspects.

As far as my country is concerned, possession of illegal drugs is and remains punishable by criminal law. We should continue to consider the non-use of drugs as a basic principle.

In order to adapt and make uniform our policy on the sale and possession of drugs, we recently established guidelines that for the first time make a distinction between cannabis and its derivatives and other illicit drugs. That distinction was established in accordance with the level of danger posed by the product to physical and mental health.

The greatest priority is accorded to the punishment of drug crimes committed with aggravating circumstances, as, for example, when the guilty party is part of an association that sells drugs or heads an association of that type; when a crime has been committed against a minor; or when drug use has caused in another person a seemingly incurable illness, a permanent inability to work, the total loss of use of an organ, serious mutilation, or even death.

Concomitant with a strict and consistent policy for drug trafficking and a policy that is designed effectively to combat drug consumption, we should also adopt a more understanding attitude in dealing with the problems experienced by drug addicts, their parents and their families. Legislative punishment for drug abuse as contained in the new guidelines rests explicitly on the following principle: that it is not possible nor desirable that justice be the only social rule. Drug users should be able to benefit first and foremost from a broad range of services geared to drug addiction.

We must avoid creating a situation where drug addicts who have committed no other crime than that of possessing drugs find themselves in prison. The penal approach, and more specifically imprisonment, should be the method of last resort in trying to resolve the problem of the use of illicit drugs.

Finally, we should also recall that preventive machinery has been established to prevent the use of the Belgian financial system for money-laundering purposes. That machinery complements earlier penal legislation in this regard.

The drug problem has many dimensions. It threatens our societies and our children. Together, however, we have the power to muster the common will to combat it. We must take steps to ensure that one day it will be eliminated.

The Acting President: I thank the Chairman of the delegation of Belgium for his statement.

I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. David Rubadiri, Chairman of the delegation of Malawi.

Mr. Rubadiri (Malawi): I should like, as today's proceedings come to an end, to pay tribute to President Hennadiy Udovenko, who was elected to lead us at this most important time to discuss issues that go beyond simply the flexing of muscles — by those who have them — to include also social issues, in which a number of us are more interested. We are grateful that he has led us throughout this year into this summit, which I hope will be a culmination of our understanding of why the United Nations matters to all nations, large or small.

The drug problem, as we all know, has a long history, matched only by the resolute and tenacious action of the United Nations and the standard-setting effort of the League of Nations before it. My delegation particularly applauds the central and pivotal role that the United Nations has played in recent years, and continues to play, in this area. This special session, coming 10 years after the adoption of one of the most significant instruments in the area of international cooperation — the 1988 United Nations Convention against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances — is an obvious opportunity to take stock of our achievements and failures and to renew our commitment to work together concertedly in combating the drug problem.

Although critics have questioned the overall drug policies and interventions that have sometimes been pursued, the serious threat that drugs pose to the social fabric of our societies has long been widely acknowledged. Many countries have spoken yesterday and today — leader after leader — and have given a clear description of how the drug problem has affected their societies. Indeed, the bottom line is this: there is no society that has not been negatively affected, in one way or another, by this menace.

The country that I represent, Malawi, is no exception. Malawi is basically a producer of cannabis. Recent trends reveal an increase in consumption and in trafficking. We have also become a transit country for hard drugs and psychotropic substances. The traditional fine distinction between producer, transit and consumer countries no longer has any practical importance to us. The socio-economic ramifications of these developments are translating into early school drop-out among our youth, increased thefts and robberies and pressures on our other social structures of everyday life. Although we have in place the necessary legal and institutional framework, we realize that it is a problem that we cannot successfully combat alone.

Malawi is a party to all the important international instruments in this area, including the 1988 Convention against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances. The drug legislation of Malawi has recently been revised to provide for stiffer penalties for drug trafficking. On the institutional front, the police have a special unit that deals with drug issues. There is also an inter-ministerial committee that advises the Government on matters of policy. The Government also recently established a fund to promote cooperation between the public and the police. So far, the response has been more than encouraging and has led to increases in arrests.

On the supply reduction side, the police, within their financial and capacity constraints, have carried out crop destruction operations, often using expensive means because of the rugged terrain on which cannabis is grown. This is like trying to curb the elephant population so that the tusks cannot be taken. This is also the case with cannabis for those who can afford it.

Public awareness and rehabilitation programmes are challenges that Governments, with the cooperation of non-governmental organizations, are trying to confront. Malawi has enhanced its cooperation at the regional level with all the countries of the region within the context of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) and with the cooperation of the Nairobi office of the United Nations International Drug Control Programme — particularly in information-sharing — and has achieved successes in controlled delivery operations.

Also in the region, Malawi is a signatory to the SADC Drug Trafficking Protocol. The process is under way to ratify the Protocol. We are also considering how we can collectively address the question of money-laundering.

This synopsis clearly demonstrates the political will and commitment of the Government to address fully the drug problem in the country and particularly in the region. In this regard, we associate ourselves with the statement that was made by Zimbabwe on behalf of the Organization of African Unity and SADC.

We have many constraints but we are confident that with the help of the international community we shall succeed in our efforts. In this regard, Malawi welcomes the report of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs acting as the preparatory body for this session. The outstanding work accomplished by the Commission will certainly keep the fight against the drug problem, in its many facets, high on the agenda of the international community.

The fact that the documents have been presented to the Assembly without any brackets has some significance — namely, of resolve and commitment — that should not be lost. The approaches taken are holistic, balanced and result-oriented. Malawi supports all the instruments that the Commission adopted on the basis of the six themes that form an important thrust of this special session and of the future agenda. As we proceed to take action on these instruments tomorrow, let me assure the Assembly that Malawi will not be found wanting in its efforts to concretize the outcome of this session. The documents that we will join in adopting will constitute for us a global strategy that should lead to the realization of a drug-free world in the next millennium.

But, indeed, since I must bid the Assembly good night in a few minutes, may I interject here a line from the Welsh poet Dylan Thomas. I shall add my own second line, but it will make sense:

"Do not go gentle into that good night.
Rage, rage until the coming of the dawn we seek."

The Acting President: I thank the Chairman of the delegation of Malawi for his statement.

The meeting rose at 8.55 p.m.